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# The German Military in the Age of Total War

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best, it is a brief glimpse into the Soviet strategy of mobilization and the early part of armed conflict. The key themes one gets from that glimpse are that mass and maneuver will yield the desired results—either overwhelming victory or an early decisive engagement.

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Deist, Wilhelm, ed. *The German Military in the Age of Total War*. Leamington Spa, England: Berg Publishers, 1985. 362pp. \$42.50

For much of the 1970s, the West German Defense Ministry's Military Historical Research Office at Freiburg was a well-kept secret. Happily this is no longer the case. Its superb journal, *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* and its projected ten-volume history of the Second World War—now nearly half completed and contracted to Oxford University Press for an English-language edition—have firmly established the office and its major scholars.

This welcome anthology permits a group of distinguished historians, either affiliated with the office or closely associated with it, to present concise synopses of their larger German works to Anglo-American readers. It is first and foremost a collection that stresses the broader political, economic, strategic, and ideological setting of the military in Germany. In approach and analysis, the Freiburg group has truly led the way towards what one may reason-

ably call the "new" military history; drum and trumpet sagas, mercifully, are not its concern.

The "glue" that holds the contributions together is a general belief in Germany's failure in the twentieth century to bring aims and resources into proper relation to each other, as well as a constant overestimation of its own capabilities and a corresponding underestimation of the adversary's: hubris in full bloom. In the opening essay, Wolfgang Petter analyzes the disastrous armaments policy of Wilhelmian Germany and its concern with potential domestic opposition. Lothar Burchardt follows similar lines by suggesting that the Kaiser's government failed to put the nation on a secure war footing. Hitler would strive to remedy this failure by seeking a balance between production for the war and for the civilian population in order to maintain domestic stability. Rolf-Dieter Müller traces the German preparations for chemical warfare between 1919 and 1945, concluding that while Hitler's decision not to use it may be seen as "a model case of working deterrence," the discussions behind its development revealed a "shocking unscrupulousness" on the part of politicians, industrialists, and military leaders both in Germany and elsewhere. Müller's uneasy conclusion is that "unpredictable factors and individuals" accounted for its nonuse.

Wolfram Wette suggests that even Weimar Germany was beset by a fatalistic fascination with war, while Michael Geyer reiterates his thesis

that Germany's soldiers sought "reconstruction through armament." By 1938, he argues, Germany was "an armed camp that could not possibly demobilize without major social and political repercussions—and the army did not want Germany to disarm."

Four essays tackle the Third Reich. Klaus Maier cogently makes the case that the *Luftwaffe* from the start saw its role as that of a "deterrent force" by "producing fear and political intimidation" among civilian populations. Bernd Wegener showcases his work on the *Waffen-SS* as the "military instrument of the National Socialist movement." Jürgen Förster once more traces the penetration of the *Wehrmacht* with National Socialist racial doctrine and its war of extermination in the East. Those who still believe that the army fought a "clean" war in the Soviet Union might take a look at the 707th Infantry Division which in a single month managed to shoot 10,431 of its 10,940 "captives." Along similar lines, Manfred Messerschmidt traces the manner in which military law and courts changed to embrace and to enforce this racialization of the armed forces. Whatever one may think of the relative "fighting power" of the German and American Armies, it is instructive to remember that whereas the U.S. Army managed to maintain discipline and morale with only one case of capital punishment, the *Wehrmacht* executed no less than 11,664 of its own men! Finally, Bernard Kroener returns to the theme of unlimited goals and "limited mobilisation of resources" by show-

ing how the *Blitzkrieg* concept was undermined by the competing demands of army and industry.

Naval history is accorded two entries. Jost Dülffer plots no less than five levels of decisionmaking and seven phases of the naval buildup under Admiral Raeder to suggest that while the navy again sought world-power status through Mahanian precepts, it was no more prepared in 1939 than it had been in 1914 to tackle the twin problems of disadvantageous geographical position and inferior fleet. Gerhard Schreiber demolishes the popular notion that Raeder's Mediterranean program of September 1940 could have brought victory: on the one hand, Britain's opposition was backed by the Dominions as well as the United States; on the other hand, it would have required compromises with, and concessions to, Italy, Spain, and Vichy France that Hitler simply was not willing even to contemplate.

In conclusion, this is a superb smorgasbord that should satisfy the most critical palate. Wilhelm Deist has served English-language readers well by assembling this collection of essays otherwise inaccessible, even in truncated form, to many scholars on this side of the "great common."

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Bird, Keith W. *German Naval History: A Guide to the Literature*. New York and London: Garland, 1985. 1121pp. \$154